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THE
PRISONER;

OR,

Nature's Complaint to Justice.

A

POEM.

By a LADY in Confinement.

I was in Prison, and you came unto me.

L O N D O N:

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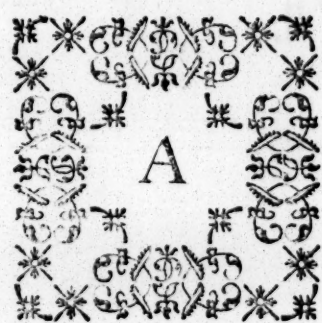
M.DCC.LVIII.





To the RIGHT HONOURABLE

GEORGE Lord LITTLETON,



S a Tribute due to his fine Learning,
Genius and Taste; his distinguish'd
Humanity, his sincere Attachment to
true Religion and Virtue; this Poem
is inscribed

By His Lordship's

Most humble Servant,

The Author.

THE AUTHOR'S

TO THE HONORABLE

THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

IN PARLIAMENT ASSEMBLED

THE FOLLOWING

MEMORIAL

OF THE

MEMBERS

OF THE



T H E
P R I S O N E R.

A
P O E M.

A

M I D' these Cells, where mortal Anguish reigns
With Iron Scepter o'er th' afflicted Heart of Man,
And sinks the Free-born Soul to Hell, I lay:
O Night ! Here Night incessant spreads her Veil,
Obdurate o'er the Soul's dark Eye, in dread
Eclipse, and blots out ev'ry Joy ; the Clang,

B

The

The horrid Clang of Ear-tormenting Chains,
Cerberian Bars ! was hush'd : Now *Paul's* deep Roar,
 The neighb'ring lofty *Paul's* now told it One.
 My Bed, what Bed ? On brazen Bars outstretch'd,
 By Scorpions goaded, by Reflection stung
 Of sweet Remembrance past ; my aching Limbs,
 My tortur'd Thoughts, my Self-tormented Soul,
 From Side to Side.—Can this, Oh *Britain* ! This
 Be just ? Kind Slumber lock'd at length each Sense,
 Each wearied Sense lay steep'd in still Repose,
 Whilst vig'rous Fancy took her Turn to reign.
 All hail, ye Visitants divine ! Draw near ;
 Descend, ye healing Dews, descend ; draw near
 Ye Comforters ; I see you come ; make Haste
 Ye Ministers : What Light is this ! What Beams !
 My Dungeon is no more ; my Hell is fled.
 Lo Heav'n ! Lo Angels now inhabit here
Humanity ! Thy gracious Form I know :
 O steal'st thou here by Night ? Come nearer yet ;
 How Pity's Drop hangs joyful on thine Eye !
 How comely in thy outstretch'd giving Hand
 That Cup, with Cordials for the fainting Soul !

See,

See, see the genial Bliss above the Brim,
 Exulting dances to my raptur'd Sight !
 Oh ! nearer to my Lip, thou heav'nly Draught !
 By Angels caught from Springs of Joy and Love ;
 'Tis downy all about me, and beneath ;—
Humanity makes *Paradise* of Hell.

It is her Godlike Mission here below
 The Shape humane reply'd ; her Master when
 From Heav'n he stoop'd to put her Nature on,
 In meek Disguise beneath her plain Attire,
 The great Example gave, in *Britain* once.
 She ceas'd ; I eagerly request, and said,
 “ What awful Form is she, who near thy Side,
 “ With friendly Frown, impatient seems,
 “ Yet waits thy gracious Nod ?” She onward moves.

“ Ye Realms accurs'd ! what Regions dire are these ?
 Th' indignant Pow'r reply'd ; her Attributes,
 Her Form confess'd—“ My Name (she said) is *Justice* ;
 “ Detested Dome ! On *Africk's* sanguine Shore,
 “ On *Scythia's* bleak, and barbarous Rocks uprear'd.”

She

She howl'd, and half the horrid Pile gave way.
 What miserable Mansions ! Who dwells here ?
 Oh ! what their Cause ? their Crime ? their Country ? say ;
 I visit not these Realms, where *Rancour*, *Rage*,
Revenge : Hah ! whither hast thou led my Steps ?
 Thyself a Stranger here.—What ruthless Arm
 With Iron Rod, vindictive rules this dismal Land ?
 Nor *Africk's* sanguine Shore this Pile sustains,
 Nor *Scythia's* bleak, and barbarous Rocks ;
 The weeping Virtues mild return'd, her Face,
 Her pitying down-cast Face, with blushing Cheek,
 Averse, with wringing Hands, with lab'ring Voice,
 She sobbing said ;—Alas ! 'Tis *Britain's* Isle :
Augstua, where thou stand'st, her Capitol,
 The Chamber of her Kings, thy once lov'd Home !
 These, whom Misery, whom grim Confinement,
 With Marks of Care, have deep impress'd, and Woe,
 Were Free Men once, were Denizens of Light
 And Air ; they tasted once the Breath of Heav'n ;
 They saw the rising, and the setting Sun ;
 The Seasons in their Circles once they saw ;
 The Winter's Frost beheld, the Summer's Rose,

The

The friendly Face divine ; they once were *Britons* !
 Misfortune is too oft their only Crime :
 Since that, alas ! has made them poor, what Crime
 So great ! for that they groan, unpity'd groan.
 No ruthless Arm with Iron Rod rules *Britain* ;
 Great *George* now reigns, and long hath reign'd ;
 His People's Parent, and thy darling Son.
 Nay, start not, Sister, Oh ! his Royal Ear
 Like that of Heaven, is ever open to
 Affliction's Cry ; but here, no Gleams of Grace,
 No Royal Ray can shine, thy Form bely'd,
 Thy dreadful Form, before these Gates they place,
 Where *Liberty*, where *Joy* can never come,
 'Till yonder hollow Fiends (how wide they gape !)
Revenge and *Avarice* are gorg'd and cram'd ;
 And they, alas ! are never satisfied ;
 The Victims of *Revenge* and *Avarice*,
 My Form bely'd, where *Joy* can never come,
 Nor *Liberty*, her Parent dear, nor *Hope*.
 Poverty their Crime ! by hard Misfortune's
 Rigid Hand committed ; that unlook'd for,
 That resistless Hand, in *Britain's* Capitol !

Of human Rights ammerc'd, and human Aid ;
 Depriv'd of Reason's Intercourse ; bereft
 Of sweet Society in *George's* Reign !
 The Gifts of Nature, and the glorious Sun !
 Once more my Flight, indignant, let me take
 From Earth. Detested Spot ! This feeble Sword,
 This idle Ballance ; say, what cannot Kings ?
 To whom *Humanity*, Thou Attribute Divine,
 Thou Ray of God ! unerring *Justice* turn !
 Oh ! hither turn thine Eye impartial ; see
 What dread Resemblance human Passions bear,
 To Spirits reprobate ; infernal Fiends,
 Who gorge their never-ending hellish Spite,
 As some report, by giving Others Pain ;
 Eternal Pain, tho' hopeless of Relief,
 The least Relief, themselves which some ascribe,
 Oh ! dreadful Blasphemy, to God's Decree.
 She said : Then turning, with a radiant Smile,
 A Curtain wide, with hasty Hand, she drew,
 Or what a Curtain seem'd ; a Space appears
 Through Twilight dim, by doubtful Sight
 As yet discern'd ; it seem'd the Dwelling sad

Of *Poverty*, of *Want*, of *Famine* foul :
 When straight a Mirror in her lifted Hand
 She joyful waves, with mystic Air sublime,
 With Angel Mien delightful; the Chambers,
 The Dens obscure flam'd out, confess'd to view,
 Then *Filth*, then *Avarice* for once saw Light;
 When lo! a Miser at his Hoards on brood:
 His startled Eye aghast, with *Anger* curs'd with Pain,
 The splendid Waste, and thought his Heaps diminish'd.
 Prostrate on the Ground, a wailing Mother
 At Distance near the Door, imploring wept:
 Two shiv'ring Babes, half naked near her Side,
 With thrilling Tones, incessant scream'd for Bread,
 And pierc'd the pitying Walls; his Heart was free.
Famine in each harmless Eye sat pleading,
 Each waning Cheek, each Food-intreating Tear,
 And join'd with Nature in their pure Petition:
 Her Fang she loos'd, she fast'ned on his Sight,
 But there her antient Traces soon she knew.
 Not *Tully's* Tongue could touch the Soul like this,
 And yet the flinty Villain felt not Pity.
 A figur'd Scrole, within her out-stretch'd Hand

The wretched Matron held ; and oft besought
 The harden'd Monster's Eye to view the fair Contents.
 Alarm'd at length th' insatiate hoary Fiend,
 With grim Reluctance stretch'd his griping Paw,
 And near his haggard Orbs, with window'd Nose,
 Erect the faithful Scrole perus'd severe:
 He frown'd; he stamp'd; he swore it lack'd a Shilling;
 There let him rot ; the Law can do no Wrong;
 A Shilling both the Indies is to me ,
 Take hence, thou Beggar, hence what dreadful Waste,
 And straight his winking wretched Lamp put out.

Another Scene, through spacious Doors appear'd,
 That wide disclos'd, as on their gilded Valves
 The Mirrors missive Beam directed shot;
 When lo ! upon a purple Couch outstretch'd,
 Beneath a lofty disproportion'd Arch,
 Where mimic Elegance with awkward Air;
 Absurd, and clumsy Cost, with tasteless Mien,
 Benighted met, a wealthy Burgefs lay;
 By Traffick swell'd to Bulk enormous,
 And lazy Luxury in Life's dull Eve ;

That

That Fund of aggregated Pain laid up
 For greedy *Age* ; the *Stone* had rack'd him long,
 The *Gout* by turns her Kindred Pest reliev'd,
 On painful Duty at his Life's Expence,
 And Night by Night kept up the dreadful Watch.
 He turn'd, he groan'd, and often call'd on Death ;
 His joyful Friends around him wept sincere,
 And at his Side *Devotion* kneeling strove.
 One Friend he long had lov'd, one Kinsman dear,
 By faithful Offices much dearer made ;
 He still increas'd his Wealth; and with his Wealth
 His Love kept equal Pace : A luckless Step
 (Misfortune will in *Prudence* spite prevail)
 The thriving Intercourse at length o'erthrew,
 And sudden blasted one essential Scheme ;
 His Friend cast off, his brutal *Vengeance* still
 Pursues inexorable, his Friend condemn'd,
 (Ill *Chance* had giv'n him Pow'r) neglected groans,
 With Virmin vile, with Villains doom'd to dwell.
 In vain *Intreaty* pleads his just Release ;
 In vain *Religion* joyns ; nay, *Friendship* lifts
 Her ardent Hands in vain, nor Death can move.

Give, give me back my Thousands, still he roar'd,
 As intermitting *Pangs* and *Groans* gave leave,
 He snap'd at fell *Revenge*:—O precious Laws!
 I have his Body, and in that his All.
 But Death may set him free—I shall not see it;
 That, that's a Comfort to my tortur'd Soul:
 In th' other World, oh could I there Arrest!
 Take Notice now, that with my latest Gasps;
 Oh! my precious Thousands! Now take Notice,
 Aye, let it be remark'd with Joy, that now,
 (The fatal Moment is at Hand), that now,
 That now, (oh! quickly crack) that at my Death
 I leave my Sister's only Son in Chains.
 He groan'd, and with a desp'rate Oath expir'd.

Un-number'd were the grating Groups that past
 In sad Succession o'er the horrid Scene.
 Obedient to her Hand Divine, *Distrust*,
Aversion, *Anger*, *Malice*, dark *Revenge*,
 With div'lish *Rancour* black'n'd ev'ry Brow,
 And half unpeopl'd Hell; whose Image grim
 The Form bely'd of God, in guilty Man;

Whilst

Whilst blushing *Nature* turn'd the Face aside :
 Fierce Neighbour might you there with Neighbour see,
 In hateful Conflict ; Brother, Father, Friend,
 Triumphant gnashing o'er each other's *Woes* ;
 Where nothing could be had but Groans and Tears ;
Compassion, Charity, and meek *Redress*,
 With sweet *Religion*, long had ta'en their Flight ;
 Whilst *Cruelty* and *Pride*, and curs'd *Revenge*,
 Attrocious trampled on the *Christian* Name,
 With more than *Turkish* Ire, and hourly cram'd
 The loathed Prisons ; *Justice* could no more.
Freedom This ! (she said)——Has *Fame* bely'd him ?
Corruption fell before him : Oh ! I must be calm,
 His Virtue sav'd this sinking Land.
 He lifts thy Glory, *Britain*, to the Stars :
 Has *Pitt* yet heard, (*Humanity*, with thee
 He oft confers) has *Pitt* yet seen within
 Thy Glass, thy clear, emphatic Glass ? Has *Pitt* ?——
 Impossible ! his Soul could never bear ;
 His Patriot Soul, oh ! haste thee to him,
 Haste *Humanity*, his Bosom kindle ;
 Thou hast a chosen rich Apartment there :

His Heart I ever rul'd. Oh let's together ;
 But *Indignation* holds me,——What avails !
 What now avails ? the Toil of Time, the Boast,
 The proud Distinction of the *British* Name ?
 Her Laws, her Statutes, honour'd thro' the World,
 And envy'd : What avails the martyr'd Patriot
 In the Field of Blood ? If Individual
 Thus let loose, on Individual falls,
 With rigid *Fury*, with vindictive *Rage*,
 In artificial Anarchy imbroid'd,
 In legal Tyranny : Oh ! give me back
 The State of *Nature* in her rustick Reign,
 Nor crush my Vitals with oppressive Laws ;
Humanity stir up each honest Breast,
 Each elegant, each learned Pen inspire,
 Each Orator provoke, each Patriot Tongue,
 Each melting Heart, each Honey-flowing Quill,
 And list my *Melmoth* in thy *Christian* Cause,
 His melting Heart, his Honey-flowing Quill,
 Are thine, thine, *Littleton's*, much honour'd Muse,
 Thine *Seckar's* sacred Lawn,—thy *Stanhope* still,
 (Oh, why will *Nature* sink beneath such Parts)

Thy

Thy *Stanhope* still shall hear thy favour'd Voice
Humanity, his Heart, his feeling Soul,
 His Tongue, his Pen, are thine,—Restore him Heav'n!
 Illustrious *Boyle*,—O *Virtue* must endure.
 Thy vital Wound,—'Twas Heav'n's Will that gave it,
 And more than Man was taught on Earth to feel:
 Within thy Bosom *Charity* and *Truth*,
 And ev'ry human *Virtue* now are Mourners;
 And *Genius* too for pow'rful *Nature* bids)
 Puts on the Cypress sad, alas! where late
 The Laurel bloom'd, and shades thy learned Brow.
 May *Reason's* Hand, by sweet *Religion* taught,
 Restore thy honour'd Wreath, and heal thy Soul.
 Let polish'd *Hillsborough's* noble Classic Strain,
 With inbred *Energy* exalted shine,
 In suffering *Nature's* Cause, emphatic glow
 With *Eloquence* humane, with manly *Zeal*,
 To move, to melt, to charm the list'ning Senate;
 Whilst gracious *Greenville* prompted by thyself;
 What cannot *Genius* with *Good Nature* do,
 With *Pow'r* combined, with publick *Influence*?

Neglected *Genius* !——But the Time draws near,
 Her much lov'd, wish'd Mellennium is at Hand,
 See, see yon op'ning *Dawn*, with joyful Beams,
 Proclaim aloft the intellectual Noon,
 And drive the Shades of *Ignorance* and *Night*
 From *Britain's* Hemisphere, to *Scythian* Skies
 Their own.——See ev'ry rising Virtue follow :
 She said, when lo ! the Windows of the *Morn*,
 By *Time's* indulgent early Hand disclos'd,
 With Streams of Crimson Light, rejoicing glow'd,
 And charm'd the House of Bondage.——Horror fled,
 Whilst neighb'ring *Thames*, by kind'red Ocean sent
 In genial swelling Tides, brought up
 The Breath of Life, sweet smelling to the Sense,
 In Cordials rich, and paid my Heart a Visit.

The Vision fled, but left within my Soul,
 My raptur'd Soul, deep Traces of Delight,
 And cancel'd ev'r'y Care.——Lo ! near my Side
 (What will not *Goodness* do?) a Message stood,
 A gracious Message sent by her who gives

Britania's

Britannia's happy Throne a Race of Kings;
 O sweet Concession! Angels thus will stoop
 From Heav'n on Errands of supernal Grace,
 Her *M—dd—f—x* her minist'ring Angel, waits
 Obsequious on her Will, and chearful wafts
 The princely Mandates of her Grace with Speed.
 Illustrious Pair, (O Royal Dame,) in them,
 In them *Humanity* and *Justice* reign.

F I N I S.



Believe me, my dear friends,

My first intention was to write

you a long letter, but I have

been so busy that I have not

time to do so.

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The first of the letters of the

collection is by the Rev. Mr.

W. L. G. and is a very

W. L. G.

